

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1563

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALEXANDRIA 0090

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EG

SUBJECT: STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS AT ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY

1. SUMMARY: A CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS GROUP CALLED AL GAMA'A AL ISLAMIYA HAS WON ALMOST ALL OF THE INDIVIDUAL FACULTY STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS AT ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY. THE ELECTION FOR THE OVERALL CENTRAL UNION IS STILL TO BE HELD. THE UNIVERSITY IS TRYING TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH UNION LEADERS ON THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS AND OTHER MATTERS AND THE PRESIDENT IS REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE EFFORT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. END SUMMARY.

2. A GROUP CALLED AL GAM'A AL ISLAMIYA, A VERY CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS GROUP, HAS WON ALMOST ALL OF THE INDIVIDUALY FACULTY STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS WHICH ARE HELD VERY TWO YEARS AT ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY. THE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR THIS SUCCESS ARE (A) THAT THERE WAS A GENUINE, GRASS-ROOTS REACTION AGAINST THE CORRUPTION RAMPANT IN MANY OF THE STUDENT UNIONS AND (B) THAT THE GAMA'A WAS BY FAR THE BEST ORGANIZED GROUPING ON CAMPUS.

3. GAMA'A ACTIVISTS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN CAUSING SOME TROUBLE BY REVIEWING THE RELIGIOUS CONTENT OF TEACHERS' LECTURES (IN SOME FACULTIES) AND OPENLY CRITICIZING THE TEACHERS WHO FAIL TO FOLLOW THE "PROPER" CONSERVATIVE LINE. ACTIVISTS ALSO HAVE

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BEEN ATTEMPTING, TO SOME EXTENT, TO IMPOSE CONSERVATIVE LIFE-STYLES ON STUDENTS, SUCH AS ABJURING MOVIES AND CONCERTS, ATTENDING RELIGIOUS LECTURES, AND DRESSING CONSERVATIVELY. TO SOME EXTENT STUDENTS HAVE RESPONDED (E.G. MORE GIRLS APPEAR TO BE WEARING "ISLAMIC GARB" -- I.E. COVERING UP MORE), BUT SOME MODERATE STUDENTS HAVE REACTED AGAINST THIS PRESSURE (E.G. BY MAKING A POINT TO ATTEND OUR RECENT JAZZ CONCERT.)

4. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL JANUARY 25, DR. ALY REDA AL-HENEIDI, PRESIDENT OF ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY, DENIED THAT THE STUDENTS WERE CAUSING ANY TROUBLE BUT ADDED THAT THE UNIVERSITY WAS IN THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATING WITH GAMA'A LEADERS AND HE THOUGHT THAT THIS EFFORT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL UNLESS THE GROUP WAS CONTROLLED BY "OTHERS", APPARENTLY MEANING LARGER, EXTRA-UNIVERSITY CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS GROUPS -- BUT HE WAS NOT SURE THERE WAS SUCH A RELATIONSHIP.

5. DR. AL-HENEIDI SAID THAT THE UNIVERSITY IS NEGOTIATING WITH THE FAMA'A LEADERS IN AN EFFORT TO DRAW UP SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE FINAL ELECTION, THAT OF THE OVERALL CENTRAL UNION, WHICH HAS STILL TO BE HELD. AL-HENEIDI SAID HE THOUGH HE WOULD TRY TO DELAY THE ELECTIONS SOMEWHAT UNTIL HE FELT THE TIME WAS RIGHT. MEANTIME HE WAS TRYING TO COUNSEL THE UNION LEADERS, WORKING WITH THEM IN SUCH PROJECTS AS BUSSING FOR FEMALE STUDENTS AND GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR UNION ACTIVITY, IN ADDITION TO ELECTION GUIDELINES.

6. DR. AL-HENEIDI ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE WERE OTHER STUDENT GROUPS ACTIVE IN THE ELECTIONS, NOTABLY THE NASSERISTS WHO HE SUSPECTED WERE SUPPORTED BY "OUTSIDE INFLUENCES", BUT HE DID NOT ELABORATE. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, RATHER DEFINITELY THAT THE CLOSURE OF THE FOUR EASTERN BLOC CONSULATES AND CULTURAL CENTERS HAD MADE NO DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT POLITICAL AFFAIRS.
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7. WE WILL FOLLOW UP ON THIS REPORT AND ADVISE ANY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. MCCLELLAND

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